

**Q1 2011 Supplemental Answers Question 11a**  
**Nebraska Broadband Planning**  
**Quarterly Report – January 2011 through March 2011**

- 1. If the project received funding for broadband planning, please describe progress made against all goals, objectives, and milestones detailed in the approved project plan. Be sure to include a description of each major activity/milestone that you plan to complete and your current status. (Answer below.)**

The Nebraska Information Technology Commission Community Council (NITC), University of Nebraska - Lincoln (UNL), Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) and the AIM Institute are cooperatively leading the effort to address the broadband planning needs of Nebraska's communities. UNL is the fiscal agent for the planning part of the grant.

A number of activities were identified in the initial grant to identify barriers to the adoption of broadband and IT services, creating and facilitating local technology planning teams, and collaborating with broadband service providers to encourage broadband deployment and use. In the supplemental grant, activities were focused around three projects: capacity building, technical assistance and local planning. Following the NITA guidance and recent NTIA Webinar recommendation, the quarterly report will focus on the three project areas.

## **CAPACITY BUILDING**

### **Internet Connectivity and Use in Nebraska: A Household Survey**

Nebraskans were surveyed about their computer and Internet usage, challenges and desires for the future through a mail survey conducted in February and March 2010 by UNL. The survey mailed to 6,600 Nebraskans in February 2010 utilized the Dillman Total Design Method to achieve a 47% response rate. The household names were obtained from a marketing firm. The survey included four separate mailings to the households using the State of Nebraska Public Service Commission letterhead.

The first report on Internet Connectivity and Use in Nebraska was released in June 2010. The report will be available at [broadband.ne.gov](http://broadband.ne.gov) by Quarter 2 2011. The report includes regional, education, income, age, gender, racial and ethnic group comparisons. Key findings identified include the following example:

*Approximately four out of every five households (81%) in Nebraska has internet service. However, older persons, persons with lower household incomes, persons with lower education levels, households without children, and households in the nonmetropolitan areas of the state are the groups less likely to have Internet service in their home.*

The development of the questionnaire began in October 2009 and was finalized shortly after the broadband grant was awarded in January. Questions from the Pew Foundation and other national telecommunication surveys were used in order to compare results. A copy of the survey is attached.

*1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2011 Status Update:* At each of the regional forums, survey results specific to the region were shared to inform the conversation. A draft summary focused on the “Use of and Satisfaction with Broadband Service at Home by Business Ownership and Telecommuting” was written. Goal was to have a summary released in Q1 2011. Report will be released in Q2 2011.

### ***Business Survey***

Currently, 27 communities are now conducting additional business surveys in communities/regions using the Department of Economic Development Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Program. The BR&E survey asks over 10 specific questions related to technology and broadband utilization. An additional survey will be sent to businesses in 2011 to gather more specific data.

Businesses will be surveyed through DED’s Business Retention and Expansion program to identify the strengths and challenges they face in utilizing technology. Currently over 400 key businesses are surveyed annually by the Department of Economic Development Statewide. To develop the statewide plan, over 1000 businesses will be included in the database as communities and regions have the capability to gather information from all types of businesses including retail, health care and services. The BR&E survey asks over 10 specific questions related to technology and broadband utilization. Additional questions will be developed that relate specifically to future opportunities. The data will be pulled together and themes will be developed.

*1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2011 Status Update:* Businesses continue to be surveyed using DED’s BR&E program. Additional questions have been identified that will be asked during 2011 and ongoing. Questions such as:

- Would your need for broadband motivate you to relocate your business to a location that had higher-speed broadband available?
- Our local market currently offers high-speed Internet access at prices that my business can afford.
- The availability of affordable high-speed Internet access is a factor I consider in deciding where to locate my business.

The Nebraska Business Report, July 1, 2009-June 30, 2010 briefly highlighted the business surveys that were started during 2010. The report can be found at the following Web site - [www.neded.org](http://www.neded.org), pages 14 and 15. A quote from the report states, “technology is a key driver in the quest for innovation and increased productivity.”

***Inventory of Broadband and Digital Literacy Programs.*** In order to identify potential partners and to avoid duplication of efforts, an inventory of broadband and digital literacy programs will be conducted. Results will be shared with project partners, regional teams and be available on the broadband portal.

*1st Quarter 2011 Status Update.* Begin Quarter 2 2011.

**Focused Surveys.** Focused surveys in regions where there are large numbers of non-adopters will help to better understand how to increase broadband adoption. The surveys will be conducted in specific counties, regions and in some parts of metropolitan areas where usage appears to be lower and will provide these areas with data specific to them that can be used to develop a plan that addresses their future needs. The surveys will also create local benchmark data that will help determine if broadband adoption increases in these areas over time.

*1st Quarter 2011 Status Update.* Begin development of surveys in Quarter 2, 2011.

**Government and Economic Developer Survey.** To gather information on access, adoption, usage, and technical assistance needs of all county and community governments, chambers of commerce, and for economic developers, a survey (web-based where feasible) of all entities will be conducted. This information will support the development of regional and community technology plans and will be used to develop targeted technical assistance for local governments and economic developers.

*1st Quarter 2011 Status Update.* Begin development of surveys in Quarter 3, 2011.

**Follow-up Statewide Household Survey.** A follow-up survey of Nebraska households will be conducted in the Spring of 2015 (Year 5 of grant) to document changes in Internet and broadband use since the 2010 survey (which was funded in the original proposal). Regions that were originally identified as either unserved or underserved in the initial survey will be over-sampled in this follow-up survey. This data will determine program success.

*1st Quarter 2011 Status Update.* Survey planned for Quarter 2 2014.

**Creating Broadband Plan/Administrative** – To meet the objectives of the grant, the broadband planning oversight team meets on a bi-monthly basis. The initial meetings, beginning in September 2009, focused on the development of the household survey questions which allowed for the survey to be distributed in February 2010. The report findings were released in June 2010. Members of the planning oversight team continue to participate in the NTIA informational webinars, present findings at meetings regarding the planning process and communicate regularly with the Public Service Commission (PSC) on the project. There are funds in the grant to hire a project manager/coordinator to assist the planning team in creating a statewide plan. During the 1st quarter 2011, an individual will be hired to assist planning team in these efforts.

*1st Quarter 2011 Status Update:* A position description to hire a project manager/coordinator was created in Q1. Position will be hired during Q2.

## **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Three cross-training efforts were identified in the Supplemental Application to bring to share ideas and address broadband adoption and utilization. These efforts outlined below are the Statewide Conference, Regional Workshops and Webinars.

**Statewide Conference.** The focus of a statewide conference focused on broadband adoption and utilization will bring together many industries including those working in economic development, telecommunications industry, education, state government, and local government personnel.

*1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2011 Status Update:* The AIM Institute is providing leadership in this effort and the planning is moving forward. During this quarter:

- Attended Regional Broadband Forums to promote statewide conference
- Assembled internal AIM conference management team
- Reserved location for statewide conference
- Identified potential members for external conference planning team
- Identified best practices from other states in conducting a statewide conference

**Regional Workshops.** Regional workshops will be held to address specific issues related to an area on broadband adoption and utilization.

*1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2011 Status Update:* Regional workshops will begin 2012.

**Webinars.** Up to four webinars will be held each year to address broadband adoption and utilization. Topics may include how to set up community planning groups to sharing results of the various data collections, processes and best practices.

*1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2011 Status Update:* Webinars will begin in 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2011. One Webinar focused on the Internet Connectivity and Survey results was held in Quarter 3, 2010.

**Best Practice Videos.** One way to expand broadband adoption across Nebraska is to learn from communities, businesses and other organizations who are the early adopters and “get it.” This project initiative will identify at least 20 examples of best practices throughout Nebraska and conduct video interviews with key players. These individuals will be asked to describe the essential elements of their success. Each interview will be edited and compiled onto the broadband portal resource from which other communities can learn.

*1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2011 Status Update:* Began development of criteria for selection of candidates to feature in videos.

- Attended Regional Broadband Forums, identified candidates for videos
- Held preliminary discussions with UNL Extension to coordinate efforts

**Entrepreneur Acceleration System (EDAS).** Providing technical assistance to local business leaders on supporting entrepreneurs through the use of broadband technologies. Broadband access, adoption and usage are critical applications for Nebraska entrepreneurs to increase market availability. Using technology to create a share of the market base is a new way of doing economic development. Technology applications will provide a tool for local services and suppliers to access the world market allowing for global expansion of access to clients and customers. A part of the EDAS focus will be used to address how broadband can help

strengthen entrepreneurs in the State. This project has the potential to be a model for other states as they develop entrepreneurs and the impact of broadband.

*1st Quarter 2011 Status Update:* 27 Mentors were certified on core behavioral economic management principles in March 2011. 134 entrepreneurs/businesses were identified through Q1 2011.

**Technical Assistance Expertise.** The focus of this effort will be to provide technical assistance in the area of business and entrepreneurship to chambers of commerce, economic developers, and local and county stakeholders statewide and regionally to increase broadband adoption.

*1st Quarter 2011 Status Update:* Technical assistance needs will be identified throughout data collection and planning process. Initial assistance needs will be identified in 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 2011.

**Broadband Portal Development** - Develop a central broadband portal which will serve as a source of information on broadband efforts in Nebraska and technical assistance materials.

*1st Quarter 2011 Status Update:* A draft site map was reviewed in Quarter 4 2010 and the domain name has been secured - broadband.ne.gov. A temporary site has been established as we await release of the supplemental funds. The site is <http://go.unl.edu/nebroadband>.

## LOCAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING

**Regional Planning Teams.** Regional planning teams will be formed to conduct regional assessments, prioritize opportunities, and develop strategies. Regional coaches will assist planning teams in conducting the development of plans.

*1st Quarter 2011 Status Update:* Eight extension educators were identified as regional coaches to work with regions in plan development. A training was held in February to familiarize with the mapping and planning activities and to review the upcoming forums and planning process. Beginning in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2011 updates will be provided on each of the planning teams. Note: An 8<sup>th</sup> regional coach was added to focus on the Omaha metro area.

The steering team has been working on updates to the Nebraska Information Technology Commission Broadband Workbook that regional coaches will be able to use in the planning process. The workbook will be available during 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2011.

**Regional Forums.** Regional forums will be conducted to present broadband mapping and mail survey results, to solicit feedback, and to kick off regional planning efforts. Project partners will work with regional planning teams to host forums to present broadband mapping data and mail survey results, to solicit feedback, and to kick off regional planning efforts.

*1st Quarter 2011 Status Update:* During the first quarter 2011, the The first three regional forums were held in March 2011 with the remaining being held in April. The following is a brief update on each of the regional forums.

- **Northeast Regional Forum** - March 23 — Approximately 44 people attended the first regional broadband forum held mid-March in Norfolk. Participants represented local telephone companies, Internet service providers, education, municipalities, agri-business, healthcare, economic development, industry and consumers. Areas people thought a planning effort should address included broadband accessibility, affordability and education. Eighteen folks expressed interest in being part of a northeast Nebraska broadband planning effort. Currently they are joined to a listserv and discussing the logistics for gathering data and developing a broadband plan.
- **Western Nebraska Regional Forum** – March 30- 55 people attended the Western Regional Forum in Gering. Participants represented local telephone companies, Internet service providers, education, municipalities, agri-business, healthcare, economic development, industry and consumers. Opportunities in the region using broadband technology include decentralizing business & employees and educational opportunities. Eight individuals indicated that they were willing to serve on the broadband planning team.
- **North Central Regional Forum** - March 31 - North Central - Approximately 25 people attended the North Central forum in Valentine. Participants represented a wide variety of industries and communities. In the initial broadband survey held last February, only 56% of the respondents in the region indicated that they had adopted broadband. At the forum, we heard that independent telcos have been successful providing broadband in a number of communities but there were other communities that indicated their providers have not updated. Infrastructure will be one of the topics addressed in this region. Eleven people agreed to serve on the regional planning team representing many communities and industries.

Dates for the forums scheduled in April are:

- April 6 – New Frontier – North Platte - Quality Inn Convention Center
- April 7 – Southwest - McCook - Mid-Plains Enterprise Center
- April 13 – Southeast - Lincoln - Embassy Suites
- April 14 – Central – Minden - Opera House
- April 28 – Omaha - Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce

**Community Planning - North/South Omaha.** North and south Omaha were identified as underserved regions/areas through the survey of Nebraska households. The AIM Institute will be leading efforts in Omaha to address broadband adoption and utilization.

*1st Quarter 2011 Status Update:* Identified preliminary list of community partners to engage in developing and implementing outreach efforts.

**Community Planning - Cultural and Unserved Communities.** We will form additional community or local planning teams in regions/areas identified as underserved through the

survey of Nebraska households and broadband mapping data. As part of the planning process, additional data will be collected (identified in the building capacity section) and focus groups will be held. Coaches with specific knowledge of these regional areas will be added to work specifically with these areas to develop plans relevant to their situation regarding broadband adoption and availability.

*1st Quarter 2011 Status Update:* Held initial discussions with several outreach partners, including promotion of the Omaha Regional Broadband Forum. A cultural coach with experience working with the tribes has been identified. During Quarter 2 forums will be identified on each of the tribal lands. The format of the forums will be modified to include presentations by tribal colleges, a survey to be handed out on-site and then move into focus groups.

**Focus Groups.** Seven to 10 focus groups will be held with anchor institutions and utility providers as well as populations with low usage rates to gain understanding into the barriers to broadband adoption and utilization from their perspective. Focus groups will also be held with businesses including farmers and ranchers.

*1st Quarter 2011 Status Update:* The focus groups will be conducted by UNL after the analysis of the technology survey and initial results of business survey. Potential focus groups were identified during 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2010. During Q2 the initial focus groups will be held based off of topics identified in each of the regional forums.

**Community Sector Discussions.** Community Sector discussions will be held to further advance adoption of technology in specific industries such as business and entrepreneurs, chambers of commerce, agriculture and the health industry. The focus of each discussion will be to benchmark technology use across the specific sectors, set goals for improved technology, and develop a plan to achieve goals.

*1st Quarter 2011 Status Update:* The community sector discussions will begin in 2012 and conducted by UNL.

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